

# ***BBC World Service files urgent appeal to UN over abuse of BBC News Persian journalists***

The *BBC World Service* has filed an urgent appeal to UN over abuse of national security and counter-terrorism laws against *BBC News Persian* journalists



Source: © RSF [RSF](#) The *BBC World Service* has filed an urgent appeal to UN over abuse of national security and counter-terrorism laws against *BBC News Persian* journalists

This is the first time the complaint is addressed to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism.

The complaint is an updated one, following recent developments, including the publication of documents in late February 2024 by a hacking group, which appear to reveal that several current and former *BBC News Persian* journalists were convicted in absentia by a court in Tehran in February 2022 for “propaganda against the Islamic Republic”.

This comes after sanctions were imposed on Iranian officials by the UK and US in January this year for threats towards Iranian journalists in London.

The updated complaint was sent to five Special Procedures mandate-holders with whom it was first filed in December 2020 and updated in February 2022:

1. The Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression.
2. The Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran.
3. The Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions.
4. The Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences.
5. The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.



BBC Studios and SABC announce the launch of BBC Primetime

22 Mar 2024



## Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

The new complaint was also addressed, for the first time, to the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism, citing “the relevance of historic and recent events” to this UN Special Rapporteur’s mandate, including the sanctioning of *BBC News Persian* by Iran as well as the mass national security criminal investigation of *BBC News Persian* staff and the associated asset freeze.

In the appeal, submitted on behalf of the *BBC* by counsel for *BBC News Persian*, Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC and Jennifer Robinson, and presented by them as “extremely urgent”, the UN experts are requested to issue:

- A new communication to Iran, raising both Iran’s inadequate response to their previous communication in 2022, and the recent developments.
- A public joint statement from UN experts condemning the ongoing targeting and harassment of *BBC News Persian* journalists.



Indian journalist pays 'price for doing his work' in violent attack

26 Feb 2024



## World Press Freedom Day

“Recent developments have amplified the severe situation facing our *BBC News Persian* staff on a daily basis. They are being penalised for their journalism and professionalism,” says Liliane Landor, director, *BBC World Service*.

“As we look to World Press Freedom Day next month, we are urging UN experts to robustly condemn the Iranian authorities’ harassment and to hold the regime to account,” says Landor.

“Journalists must not be targeted for doing their job. Speaking truth to power and covering the news without fear or favour must be the cornerstones of journalism, but *BBC News Persian* and other Iranian journalists are today suffering for doing just that,” says Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary.

“We fully support this intervention from the *BBC* and encourage the UN to exercise its influence to bring safety and justice for Iranian journalists and their families who are targeted so heartlessly,” adds Stanistreet.

“Iran’s abuse of national security and counter-terrorism laws against the *BBC* and the convictions in absentia for *BBC News Persian* journalists for ‘propaganda’ against the state for their independent reporting on Iran are designed to

intimidate and silence the *BBC*'s journalism about Iran. It must stop. We call on the UN to denounce these unlawful actions in the strongest possible terms," state Gallagher KC and Robinson.



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19 Feb 2024



## Targeting and intimidation of *BBC News Persian* staff

These recent developments come in the context of comprehensive targeting and intimidation of *BBC News Persian* staff and the harassment of their families, which escalated dramatically from September 2022 in the aftermath of the mass protests and increased tension in Iran, which *BBC News Persian* has reported extensively on.

This was the subject of the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran whose final report issued earlier in 2024 documented the continuing threats and harassment of *BBC News Persian* staff.

The ongoing harassment is also documented in a 2024 survey of *BBC News Persian* staff where half of the respondents said they had received online threats or been harassed online for working for the *BBC*.

The work of the *BBC* journalists continues to cause harassment of their families or friends, with over 60% of the respondents having been harassed, threatened or questioned in Iran.

Nearly 70% said that they hadn't been able to say goodbye to one or both their parents before they passed away in Iran.

*BBC News Persian* is part of the *BBC World Service*.

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